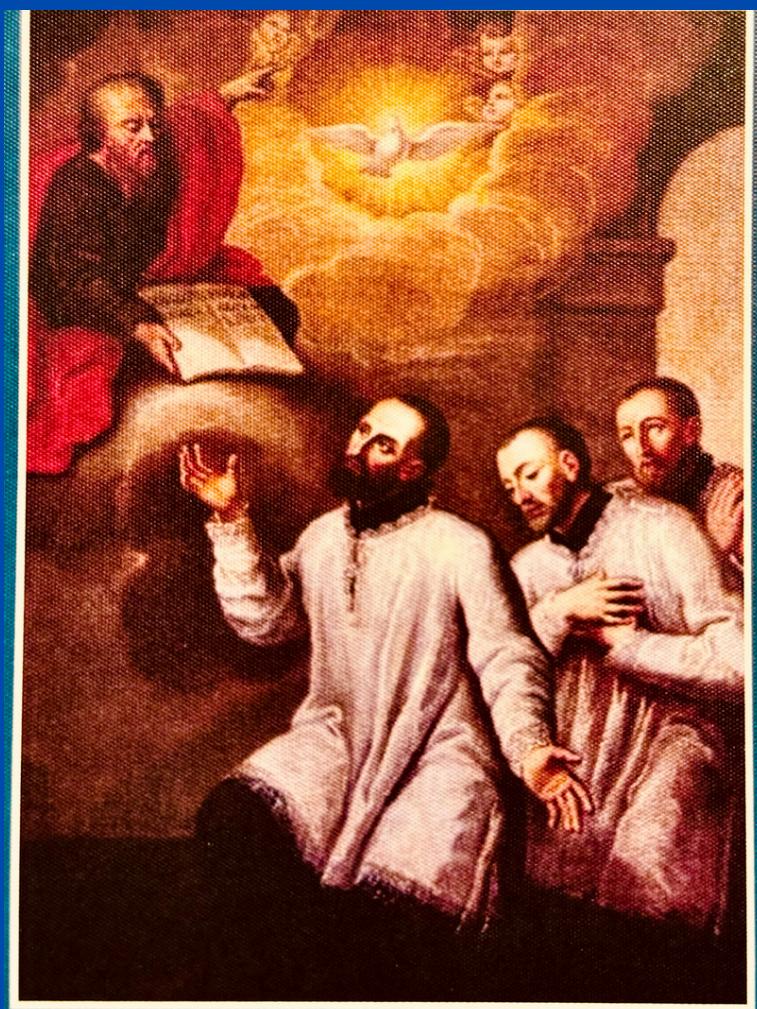


Antonio Maria GENTILI

THE BARNABITES

Appendix



**Manual of history and spirituality
of the Order of Clerics Regular
of St. Paul Beheaded**

Appendix 2

AT THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH

The Holy Spirit creates a new Religious Order not for its own sake but for the service of the Church. Most of the time it is a very humble and concealed service, like roots feeding a tree. Other times it is a very noticeable service like leaves and fruits on the branches of a tree. Cardinal Gasparri said that the Barnabites are an “Institute which can glory in many accomplishments at the service of the Church.”

We will give here a summary synthesis of these accomplishments.

1. First period: 1579-1662

The island of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea marked the last length of St. Paul’s journey to Rome, where with Peter he will lay down the foundations of the See of Peter. For the “Sons of Paul” it was Malta to mark the beginning of their direct service to the Apostolic See.

To reform the Knights of Malta, Gregory XIII sent Bishop Gaspare Visconti, who brought along priests of various nationalities for the various groups in the Island. For the Italians, maybe as suggested by the Knights Chaplain, St. Charles Borromeo, the Barnabites were selected.

When Fr. General Tornielli heard the news he tried to refuse. He did affirm the willingness and readiness of all Barnabites to answer the call, but he was afraid that such a mission would deprive the small Congregation of valuable subjects. But the Pope insisted and two Fathers, Paul Maletta (1534-1584) and Anthony Marchesi (1541-1600) left Rome on November 4, 1581. Their mission lasted two years and was almost totally successful, deserving the praises of the Holy Father.

Fr. Gabuzio wrote: “The good conduct shown by the Barnabites, for the time elected by Gregory XIII to a task so holy although not easy - Barelli comments - credited them in such a way that later his successors turned frequently to them all the time and for any happenings for the service of the Holy See and of the Universal Church.”

A seminary of Bishops

The Constitutions prescribed to work as “coadjutors of the Bishops,” but prohibited any position or office carrying dignity and titles outside those proper of the Order.

The Venerable Cosimo Dossena (1548-1620) gave the precise direction to be followed: to accept the burdens but without the honors, to work in the Church and for the Church but only as Barnabites.

In 1593 Clement VIII nominated Bishops Fr. Charles Bascapè against the opposition of Fr. Dossena, who had already been able to stop the nomination of Frs. Tornielli, Caimo, and Asinari. Fr. Dossena was afraid that the Congregation would become “a seminary for bishops,” therefore he begged the Holy Father: “when your Holiness is pleased to use our Confreres for heavy and burdensome tasks, please, allow them to live in the peace of their

state without giving them any ecclesial dignity.” This resistance increased the appreciation of the Popes for the abilities and availability of the Barnabites, and it served as a guarantee that the task would be carried out without ambition and greed, but with zeal and supernatural spirit. This was well expressed by Cardinal Anthony Barberini when, notifying Fr. Gallico of Fr. Guerin’ nomination as Bishop, with a written precept of obedience after two previous attempts, wrote: “this kind of people should be elected to office, and not those who intrigue to get it.”

The episcopal tradition of the Barnabite Order started with St. Alexander Sauli, followed by Fr. Charles Bascapè. Their example, concretized in a holiness officially recognized by the Church and proposed as a model for the faithful, has created almost like a style of the pastoral activity for generations of Barnabites called to the service of the Church through the episcopacy.

a. Fr. Charles Bascapè

The ability and wisdom shown in the government of the Order and in handling some delicate missions made him a valuable candidate for the episcopacy. Voices had spread about his appointment to Vigevano, or Pavia, or Avignone, or even to be a cardinal (1590).

It was Clement VIII, in 1593, to nominate him Bishop of Novara. His first cares were for the clergy and the formation of the seminarians. He restructured the whole diocese into regions, and through Synods he updated all the laws according to the decrees of the Council of Trent. Twice he made the pastoral visit to the 276 parishes for a firsthand experience of the needs of the faithful, allowing him to collect plenty of information which he published in *“Novaria, seu de ecclesia Novariensi.”*

Needing faithful and trusted cooperators, in 1599 he called upon his confreres, the Barnabites.

He was Bishop of Novara for 22 years, until 1615 when he collapsed at the age of 65, leaving behind an exemplary life of virtues, worthy of the honor of the altars.

He has been declared a Servant of God in 2006 by Benedict XVI.

b. Fr. Cosimo Dossena

The first Barnabite to become a bishop at the beginning of the 1600’s was no one else by Fr. Cosimo Dossena who had fought with vehemence the Holy See so that no more Barnabites would be nominated bishops. In 1594, Clement VIII entrusted him with full powers for the reform of the Congregation of the “Foglioni.” In 1605 Paul V confirmed him in the mission, and considering himself not bound to the promises of his predecessor, in 1612 he nominated him Bishop of Tortona. For three months Fr. Dossena tried every possible way to change the pope’s mind, but to no avail: “I know,” the pontiff said, “that you have come here out of obedience, against your own will, but be patient. The Lord just like Aaron calls you. I have been requested to entrust this church to a very qualified person, and the Lord has put in my heart to give it to you, therefore, take it as coming directly from him...” As he was

dressing him with his own rochet, the pope whispered in his ears that he had never been so happy in making a bishop!

These words of Paul V to Fr. Dossena remind us of the ones by Gregory XVI to Fr. Vincent Tomba (1782-1847): “Stand up and look at Christ Crucified,” the pope told him moved by his humility, “and obey him, who speaks to you through his Vicar. I do not have in mind to give you an honor but a cross; I too carry one and one heavier than yours. Come on, then, trust God and you will see miracles. We have to serve the Church: I want it and I commend it to you.”

c. Fr. Christopher Giarda

Fr Giarda was well known in Rome as a member of various Congregations: Index, Rites, and Bishops. Innocent X became his personal friend especially through his work for the canonization of St. Francis De Sales. The pope named him a Bishop giving him the choice of three dioceses. Fr. Giarda refused to accept, so the pope gave him Castro, since it was closer to Rome, allowing him to keep working for the canonization of St. Francis. “And so it has been God’s pleasure and of his Vicar,” he wrote later, “to entrust to me the care of the Church of Castro, with repeated precepts of obedience. I was not looking forward to it, rather constantly refusing it in so far as it is licit to refuse.”

Ranuccio Farnese, who had reached the point of open war between his family and the Holy See, opposed the nomination. The Pope, thinking that the opposition will limit itself to the actual entrance in the city, and hoping that he could govern the dioceses even from a close-by locality, asked the new Bishop to go to Castro anyway.

Aware of going toward possible martyrdom, on March 18, 1649, Bishop Giarda left Rome for Castro. In Monterosi, about 22 km down the road, killers hired by Ranuccio were waiting for him. Their two shots did not miss. The Abbot Gabriele Besançon, reporting the event, wrote that the dying Bishop Giarda exclaimed: “What a favor, O Lord! To value me worthy to suffer for your Holy Church. Infinite Goodness! How did I merit such a grace?” and, “If our lord (the pope) had asked or ordered me to go to Spain, or England, or India, at the service of the Church, and I was absolutely sure to be lynched in thousand of ways, I would have gone willingly and gladly. And what greater fortune for me than to have to die obeying to the one who is Head of the Church and keeps God’s place on earth, and to give some service to the Spouse of Jesus Christ?” They say that he repeated these words many times before dying.

True coadjutors of the Bishops

Besides the list of about twenty Barnabite Bishops, there is also a large number of other Barnabite confreres who, with their zeal for souls, competence and discretion, have faithfully served the Holy See in various positions.

Clement VIII, who recommended to archbishop Paleotto of Bologna to “call upon the Barnabites who are truly coadjutors of the Bishops,” entrusted to them many delicate

missions: Frs. Sigismondo Laurenti and Alexander Laiolo were chosen for the apostolic visit to the dioceses of Porto and Sta. Rufina; Fr. Dominic Boerio was called to reform the Cistercian monasteries of St. Mary of Staffarda (Saluzzo); Fr. Constantine Pallamolla was a member of a special commission to examine the popular devotion toward some possible saints, and Paul V made him also examiner of the clergy, while Urban VIII made him an apostolic visitor; Frs. Agapito Errera and Anthony Volpelli, Pomponio Tartaglia and Blaise Palma were missionaries in the diocese of Ostia; Fr. John Ambrose Mazenta was asked to investigate the boundaries controversy between Bologna and Ferrara.

Frs. Crisogono Cavagnolo and Charles Bossi instead, got involved in politics. It was Fr. Cavagnolo to bring peace between the papacy and the Ducky of Charles I of Nevers. While Fr. Bossi, dear friend of the pope, was used often by Urban VIII to deal with various princes. To better exercise his political mission, with the permission of the Superiors, he left the Order, and refused the red hat (cardinal).

Even Innocent X, the last pope of this period, availed himself of the service of the Barnabites, especially for the reform. In 1652 he published the Bull "Instaurandae disciplinae," to suppress small religious houses. Four of our houses were closed. There was a danger of merging Orders, and for us with the Theatines or with the Somaschs. But the Barnabites had nothing to fear. Three of them had collected and studied, as requested by the pope, information on each religious house in Italy: Frs. Pompeo Facciardi, Eliseo Fusconi, and Alessio Lesmi. Moreover, Fr. Facciardi, together with the Procurators General of the Carmelites and of the Cistercians was asked to resolve serious problems inside the Camillian Order. So, the Barnabites not only had nothing to fear for their Congregation, but two members of the Order were made Bishops.

2. Second Period (1662-1780)

The establishment of the General Curia in Rome in 1662, with the Breve of Alexander VII, marks the beginning of a new era for the Barnabites at the service of the church.

It is the century of Innocence XI, of Benedict XIV, of the mission in Burma, of the first Barnabite Cardinal, and especially it is the century of Barnabite bishops.

In 20 years the members of the Congregation went from 387 (1662) to 716 (1685), to reach the highest number of 788 in 1724 and 1731. The membership will remain in the 700's until 1769-70.

Also the houses reach the high number of 72. The Provinces became 6 with the addition of Gallia (1701) and Germany (1749) to Lombardy, Piedmont, Etruscan area, and Rome.

The Order became very famous, especially among Princes and upper class people, for their scientific knowledge and rich experience. The pope could at easy reach to our Congregation for all kind of help and missions, and 28 members were created bishops and one became a cardinal.

a. Benedict XIV: a Barnabite Pope!

Fr. Premoli affirms that Benedict XIV was the greatest protector of the Barnabites after St. Charles Borromeo. Our family memoirs are rich with anecdotes and episodes attesting pope Lambertini's goodness toward our Order, marked always by cordiality, esteem, and friendship.

Cardinal Prospero Lambertini became acquainted with the Barnabites in Bologna, an acquaintance which had become right away a true friendship. He called upon them as his confessors, for the direction of the seminary, and in general to help in his pastoral work, becoming, as he said, "his right arm in the spiritual government of the diocese."

As he was elected pope, the relationship continued. The same very day he was elected, he announced his intention to beatify Alexander Sauli. The meetings for the approval of the needed miracles were held at St. Charles ai Catinari with the pope always present, even in the midst of heavy rain: "Heavy rain could not extinguish the fire of love!", he would say to the Fathers who were welcoming him. The beatification took place on April 9, 1741.

It was Benedict XIV to want the Barnabites as missionaries in Burma, and he consecrated Fr. Pius Gallizia bishop to be the Apostolic Vicar. Later he elevated to the episcopal dignity also Fr. Nerini.

Besides the two missionaries, he elected as bishops also Frs. Ubaldo Baldassini and Charles Augusto Peruzzini, who was also one of his five consecutive confessors, all Barnabites. The last of them, Fr. Fortunato Venerio, in a concise description of the illness and last moments of the pope, gave to history such a picture of the pope that also Protestants attested to had been "the best of all popes."

After Benedict XIV, we have to mention Innocence XI, who succeeded the venerable Bascapè as bishop of Novara, and he too was a dear friend of the Barnabites, using them extensively in his apostolic work.

He created five of them as bishops, and called others to important tasks, like Fr. Fanti, a member of the Holy Office and Consultor of the Rites, and Fr. Alexander Maderno as member of the Holy Office and examiner of the clergy. We can mention also Fr. Caravaggi who, after finishing a series of homilies in St. Lawrence in Damasus, was hailed by the pope as "the true norm and rule for an apostolic preacher."

b. The first Barnabite Cardinal

The first cardinal created by Innocent XII was also the first Cardinal for the Barnabite Order. James Anthony Morigia (1633-1708) was bishop of St. Miniato (Florence) (1681-1683), Archbishop of Florence in 1683, and then Cardinal in 1695. The pope made him cardinal *in pectore* in 1695, and gave him the red hat in 1699. "It is probable," Fr. Premoli observes, "that the nobility of the family, his faithfulness and the favor he enjoyed with Cosimo III, Granduke of Tuscany, influenced Innocent XII in the decision; but the intellectual and spiritual qualities of Morigia were for sure on their own worth of such an honor."

Two letters from the Abbot of Chanterac to Fénelon describe the qualities of this noble personality and the role he played in the life of the Church: “A pious man, of great worth, great theologian and a favorite of the Granduke... There is no doubt that the pope putting him at the head of his faction, wanted to designate him to all people as his successor.” Also, “Cardinal Morigia has the reputation to be a great theologian. He is also esteemed for his sincere piety: he appears to be simple and infused with the most holy precepts of Religion. Whatever he says bears witness to his great understanding of situations and to his wide views so as to grasp in one sight all the circumstances: he reasons over them in a way that is superior to the one regulating most of men.”

As a Cardinal the pope wanted him in Milan, but he refused, so Clement XI appointed him to Pavia.

During the pontificate of Innocent XII, another figure that excelled was the one of Father Ottavio Visconti (1645-1697). He had been in contact with Alexander VIII, since the procurators of all Religious Orders had entrusted to him to present to the Pope a study to modify the Bull “De Apostatis et electis” of Urban VIII. He had also worked during the Conclave of 1691, and served the Holy See in negotiations with the King of England, and, as consultor of the Holy Office, he wrote the position paper against Molinism. In appreciation for his services, Innocent XII made him a Bishop.

Another relevant figure is Fr. Andrew Borelli (1651-1710). Being a theologian he was made a consultor of the Index (1693), and of the Holy Office (1697). When Bossuet, with other French Bishops, condemned Cardinal Sfondrati’s position on Predestination, Fr. Borelli was nominated to be part of the inquiring commission, which did not accept Bossuet’s position. Suddenly Innocent XII called him in private audience because he wanted him as Bishop of Noli. To express regret were the Curia Cardinals for losing him but of course the Roman Congregations kept using him: he was the one to resolve the controversies between the nuns of St. Claire and the Curia in Genoa, and to bring to an end the dissension between the Canons of St. Blaise in Finale Collegiate church and its Rector, and, finally, as delegate by the Holy See he reestablished the Regular Observance among the Conventuals in their monastery in Noli.

c. Seven Barnabites become Bishops

Clement XI conferred the fullness of the Priesthood on seven Barnabites.

1. Fr. Idelfonso Manara (1653-1726)

He was General of the Order and such a distinguished preacher that the Barnabites had to ask the intervention of Benedict XIII to obtain from the Canons of Bobbio diocese all his homilies. Cardinal Corsini, future Clement XII, had elected him Bishop of that diocese in 1716 and consecrated him in St. Charles ai Catinari. Actually the pope wanted to give him a most important diocese in the Ducky of Milan, but Fr. Manara, already 62, was getting old, so he decided to give him Bobbio, still famous but less important. His name is celebrated in the

history of the Church, as the one trusted with the task of collecting all the juridical documents related to the canonization of Innocent XI.

2. Fr. Francis Arborio Gattinara (1658-1743)

He too was well known as an effective preacher. But he became precious to the Holy Father for his wise and prudent handling of diplomatic missions in Milan and Alessandria (1701). “Having revealed himself a most subtle diplomat, he found himself entrusted with most important missions, succeeding in reconciling with the ecclesiastical authority rebel lords of various lands in Piedmont.” All this led Benedict XIII to name him a Bishop.

3. Fr. Michael Teroni (1661-1726)

A member of the Holy Office, he was often consulted by the Holy See because of his “well thought, neat, conclusive and effective solutions.” He was one of the eleven theologians who, together with five cardinals, were called in 1712 by Clement XI to examine “Moral reflections on the New Testament” by Fr. Pascaso Quesnel, an apostate priest from the Paris Oratory. And so in 1713 the pope nominated him bishop of Venosa and he himself consecrated him in St. Charles.

4. Fr. Raphael Raggi (1653-1712)

As Clement XI asked if Fr. Raggi could be the successor of Alexander Sauli in Aleria, Corsica, Cardinal Calaredo answered: “Your Holiness, he can imitate him because of three motives: he is his predecessor; he is member of the same Congregation; the Raggi family is of the same blood of the Sauli”

5. Servant of God Fr. Raymond Recrosio (1657-1732)

It was Vittorio Emmauele II to assign him to the diocese of Nices (1727), which had been without a bishop for over 20 years. His teaching and holiness were so admired by the pope that in embracing him he took his pectoral cross and gave it to him. Right after the nomination Benedict XIII sent him to Embrun to take part in a Council to deal with the deposition of the rebellious bishop Scanen of Senez.

6. Others who served the Holy See

We would like to mention the names of other outstanding Barnabites who participated in the government of the Church. For example: Fr. John Baptist Groppalo, apostolic examiner of the clergy, and secretary for the examination of Bishops; Fr. Mario Maccabei, consultor of Rites, of the Holy Office, and of the Index; Fr. Gabriel Valenzuela, examiner of Bishops; Fr. Philip Bonfiglio, examiner of the clergy and consultor of the Congregation for Relics and Indulgences. Special mention is deserved by Fr. Paul Frisi (1728-1784), who at 32, in 1760,

was chosen by Clement XIII to unravel the controversies about the borders between the people of Bologna and Ferrara. Fr. Frisi visited and studied all the localities and published his findings and recommendations. His project, although in the midst of opposition, was at the end to be adopted and followed.

7. Cardinal Sigismondo Gerdil (1718-1802)

Cardinal Sigismondo Gerdil concludes this period of service to the Holy See; he is the head of that “long series of Barnabite Cardinals (that) goes on almost without interruption,” as Pius IX will say.

It was the time of Illuminism and Jansenism leading to the French Revolution and the Napoleonic suppression. These critical years for the Church will see Barnabites in key positions: Gerdil, Fontana, Lambruschini, Bilio. Gerdil was praised by Clement VIII for his book “Criteria for the true religion,” translated into the major languages reaching seventy editions. Gerdil defended Malebranche, and rejected Locke, Montesquieu, Hobbes, and Rousseau. The pope made him a Cardinal *in pectore* in 1773, but his death prevented the nomination. In 1776 Pius VI called him to Rome as a consultor of the Holy Office, and in 1777 made him Bishop of Dibona. At the end of the same year he made him a Cardinal.

As a theologian Gerdil prepared the Breve “Super soliditatae” (1786) against Febronianism (the German version of Gallicanism), and the Bull “Auctorem fidei” (1794) against the Jansenist Synod of Pistoia. As a Cardinal he became Prefect of the Congregation of the Index and of Propaganda Fide.

At the death of Pius VI, during the Conclave held in Venice (1799-1800) he received right away a third of the votes. Although in his eighties, because of the esteem as a theologian, a philosopher, but especially for his integrity and prudence, he saw the Conclave to look at him as the future pope, but the objection of Austria against a Frenchman stopped the movement.

He died in 1802 while working on a concordat between the Holy See and France. Pius VII affirmed that at the death of Gerdil he himself “was the great looser.”

The “style” of our service

What are the characteristics of our Institute to motivate the trust and wide use of its members for delicate missions by Pontiffs and the Holy See? We will use Fr. Barelli’s words: “The esteem and veneration with which our Congregation, the smallest among all others, was always respected and honored in Rome, was born not only from the great charity exercised by many of our first Fathers at the service of their neighbors, or from the edification in the midst of which the future generations have always lived in that Holy City... but from having been known from the very beginning in the same city for the emphasis on the study of sciences so that its children would be teachers well qualified to instruct people. Therefore, they opened the schools instituted in the houses they had established in Rome, teaching the most excellent doctrines of the Scholastic and Moral Theology, the Sacred Canons, and Dogmatics, to form

its religious for the service of the Church of God. In this way ours have gained the reputation to be true coadjutors of the Bishops... As the fame of the fervor with which they attended to these studies, which are so useful to the people, spread all over the city, our schools... were attended by many well qualified subjects, who then were promoted to the Episcopal dignity and even to be Cardinals... These promotions, since they were not always of advantage to the Congregation in Rome, they turned to the great glory of their teachers, illustrious pupils who reached the highest levels of the Church of God."

So what we have is zeal for the souls and science, and that totally Barnabite discretion characteristic of that disinterested service offered by our Confreres. Fr. Barelli continues:

"...They hang on any signals from the Popes with a reverential caution that is almost a hereditary characteristic of the Barnabites, not to be involved more than necessary. The Pontiffs were very much edified by this moderation, just as by the faithfulness and integrity used in their ministry."